

Daily News Clips

10/25/19

Administration

[[HYPERLINK "https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2019/10/25/deadline-approaches-for-epa-to-challenge-air-quality-suit/"](https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2019/10/25/deadline-approaches-for-epa-to-challenge-air-quality-suit/)]

1:52 AM, OCT 25, 2019

Staff Reporter

[[HYPERLINK](#)]

Monday will be the last day for the Environmental Protection Agency to appeal a ruling that requires the bureaucracy to better regulate cross-state air pollution.

The lawsuit, led by the state of New York and joined by five other northeastern states including Connecticut, was filed in January. It challenged an EPA regulation known as the “Close-Out Rule,” which the agency issued in 2018. The Close-Out Rule stated that the agency did not need to take further action in regulating upwind states’ contributions to ozone emissions that travel downwind to Connecticut and other northeastern states — regulation which was required under a 2016 rule promulgated by the agency under the Obama administration.

At the beginning of October, the Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia ruled unanimously in the six states’ favor, deciding that the EPA must do more to address cross-state air pollution from 20 upwind states. When the court issued this decision, Connecticut Attorney General William Tong released a statement praising the ruling, calling it a “major victory for downwind states like Connecticut who rely on strong interstate regulation to protect our air quality.”

“We sit at the end of the tailpipe of the nation’s exhaust fumes, and without EPA action we are at the mercy of our country’s heaviest polluters,” the statement read. “Hopefully the EPA will now finally comply with the Clean Air Act and compel action to protect public health.”

But in the decision released earlier this month, the three-judge Court of Appeals panel wrote that it had been informed by the EPA that the agency may seek rehearing in the case, as well as the fact that it may seek rehearing in another case challenging its cross-state air pollution laws, “Wisconsin v. EPA.” The EPA’s deadline for appeal is Oct. 28 for both cases. In an email on Thursday, a spokesperson for the agency said that the EPA does not comment on ongoing litigation.

The EPA issued the Close-Out two years after its 2016 Cross-State Air Pollution Rule Update, which the agency itself acknowledged at the time was only a partial remedy that did not fully address its outstanding responsibilities under the Clean Air Act. The Wisconsin case challenges the 2016 law — not the Close-Out Rule — though Charles Rothenberger, a climate and energy attorney at the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, described the two as companion cases that are “essentially vacated on the same grounds.”

Connecticut is currently out of compliance with the EPA’s ozone emissions standards. And according to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, more than 90 percent of ozone levels in southwest Connecticut, and more than 80 percent in the rest of the state — two regions that lie in different EPA non-attainment zones — result from pollution that originates outside of the state.

Connecticut has a 2021 deadline to attempt to show compliance with the ozone standards, said Rothenberger. However, he added, the federal rules would have given the upwind states until 2023 to adjust their own standards.

“Those standards need to be aligned,” Rothenberg said.

“You don’t control your own airshed,” Robert Mendelsohn, a professor at the School of Forestry and the School of Management, told the News in an interview. Mendelsohn noted that emissions in one place can have wide-reaching effects elsewhere.

While the lawsuits are “edging us towards paying attention to things we’re not doing properly,” Mendelsohn said, “we’re still not paying attention to location.”

Mendelsohn said that he did not think the lawsuits were on target, in part because the concentration of pollution is most harmful closer to the source, and because the lawsuits focus primarily on rural emissions. Though emissions from the twenty upwind states do pollute Connecticut’s air, emissions from closer to home, he said, were more important when considering air pollution. He noted that because Connecticut is directly downwind from the New York metro area, it receives significant pollution from the city. Ideally, Mendelsohn added, areas and counties with the highest potential to cause damage would have the most strictly regulated emissions.

Rothenberger noted that the coalition lawsuit comes in a context of greater challenges to environmental protections under the Trump administration.

“This falls into a pattern with the Trump administration at least attempting to roll back environmental standards under a whole host of laws,” he said, noting the administration’s challenges to the Endangered Species Act, as well as the administration’s announcement this

summer that California would no longer be allowed to set its own motor vehicle emissions standards, which are typically more stringent than the nation's as a whole.

Ozone, the pollutant for which Connecticut fails to meet EPA standards, is a colorless toxic gas.

[[HYPERLINK "https://news.bloombergenvironment.com/environment-and-energy/trump-epa-forges-unlikely-ties-with-animal-rights-groups"](https://news.bloombergenvironment.com/environment-and-energy/trump-epa-forges-unlikely-ties-with-animal-rights-groups)]

Oct. 25, 2019, 6:00 AM

- EPA recently announced a phaseout of animal testing requirements by 2035
- PETA has a growing list of collaborations with EPA

Left-leaning advocacy organizations have lined up to oppose the Trump administration's EPA at virtually every step, but one group stands as a stark outlier: animal rights activists.

Leaders from the Humane Society and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals flanked Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler last month as he announced plans to eliminate nearly all animal testing experiments by 2035.

For animal rights groups, the announcement was hailed as a victory for both animals and the environment. But for other advocacy groups with much broader mandates, it reflected a growing difference of opinion about the role that animal suffering plays in regulating thousands of potentially harmful chemicals.

Strange Bedfellows

Relationships between the EPA and the animal rights community haven't always been friendly: Back in 1990s the EPA was a regular focus of protests over the agency's reliance on animal in toxicology testing on chemicals and pesticides.

That opposition has all but vanished as animal rights groups have become more involved with shaping policy, according to the Humane Society.

"Under Administrator Wheeler's leadership, EPA continues to forge a pathway to end decades of reliance on conventional animal tests," said Sara Amundson, president of the Humane Society Legislative Fund.

A week after Wheeler's announcement, the agency released a draft science policy that would allow companies to seek waivers for a pesticide toxicity test [[HYPERLINK "https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-09/documents/draft-waiver-guidance-avian-sub-acute-dietary.pdf"](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-09/documents/draft-waiver-guidance-avian-sub-acute-dietary.pdf)]. That policy was the byproduct of a [[HYPERLINK "https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30922892"](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30922892)] co-authored by the EPA and the PETA International Science Consortium.

“Twenty years ago, I don’t think animal-protection organizations were recognized as stakeholders,” said Amy Clippinger, director of PETA’s Regulatory Testing Department. “Now our scientists attend all the same meetings and forums. There’s increased transparency and inclusion across the board.”

Testing on ‘Human Animals’

Environmental watchdogs including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Washington D.C.-based Environmental Working Group (EWG) claim that while ending animal-based testing may spare animal lives in the lab, it risks exposing many more to harm in nature.

“The government is and will continue testing chemicals on animals—it’ll just be human animals,” said Scott Faber, senior vice president of government affairs at EWG. “Rhetorically speaking, it seems like EPA is showing more concerns for lab rats than the people the agency is charged with protecting.”

Faber told Bloomberg Environment he suspects that EPA’s motivation for eliminating animal testing is less about animal welfare and more about easing the way for chemical companies to get their products to U.S. markets.

But environmental groups would criticize his approach “no matter how good it is for the environment,” Wheeler said last week while speaking at Case Western Reserve University’s School of Law.

“I was immediately accused of doing this because of the chemical companies,” Wheeler said. “I’ve never talked to a chemical company about animal testing at all.”

Better Tests?

While it’s getting attention now, EPA’s interest in nonanimal testing methods isn’t exactly a new direction for the agency.

A 2007 [[HYPERLINK "http://dels.nas.edu/resources/static-assets/materials-based-on-reports/reports-in-brief/Toxicity_Testing_final.pdf"](http://dels.nas.edu/resources/static-assets/materials-based-on-reports/reports-in-brief/Toxicity_Testing_final.pdf)] by the National Academy of Sciences, which EPA endorsed, found that cell-based tests and biochemical approaches could eventually make it possible for scientists to evaluate more chemicals, faster, and at much lower cost than tests involving whole animals.

In a [[HYPERLINK "https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-09/image2019-09-09-231249.txt"](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-09/image2019-09-09-231249.txt)] to agency staff, Wheeler said that developing effective nonanimal methods of testing was a key part of the strategic directives Congress intended in the 2016 amendments to the Toxic Substances Control Act.

“Animal testing is expensive and time-consuming,” Wheeler said. “The agency must develop more accurate, quicker and more cost-effective test methods if it is to meet its 21st century commitments.”

But others say that while alternative testing methods like advanced computer modeling, or testing on engineered tissues or human cells—called in-vitro testing—have developed rapidly in recent years, they still can’t capture all complex chemical exposure risk factors.

‘Based on Sound Science’

“When it comes to chronic or systemic health effects, these methods still lack the ability to capture the biological processes that occur in whole living organisms,” [[HYPERLINK "https://www.nrdc.org/experts/jennifer-sass/epa-attack-science-targets-critical-animal-tests"](https://www.nrdc.org/experts/jennifer-sass/epa-attack-science-targets-critical-animal-tests)] Jennifer Sass, a senior scientist with the NRDC.

In developing treatments for complex disorders like infertility, autism, cancer, Parkinson’s disease, and even obesity, Sass said some animal testing might still be necessary to fully understand the relationship between chemicals and the environment.

But animal welfare groups counter that rather than decreasing the quality of data in risk assessments, the changes EPA is proposing could actually result in tests that are easier to reproduce, and since they are often based on human tissues and cells, are actually more predictive of human impacts than animal testing.

“I can say with certainty that EPA’s decisions and policies on animal testing are based on sound science,” said PETA’s Clippinger.

In recent years, PETA has worked with EPA to develop a list of [[HYPERLINK "https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-06/documents/alternative_testing_nams_list_june22_2018.pdf"](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-06/documents/alternative_testing_nams_list_june22_2018.pdf)] which PETA says could eliminate the need for hundreds of unnecessary and duplicative tests, while retaining the same level of protection for human health.

“Whenever a previous test is waived, it is because EPA scientists have reviewed decades of data that prove the new test will protect the human health and the environment just as well, or better, than the old one,” said Clippinger.

‘Just Cells in a Petri Dish’

But some scientists aren’t yet convinced.

“When you go to regulate a chemical, the risk assessor has to answer the question, ‘What is the adverse effect of the chemical?’” said Laura Vandenberg, an endocrinologist and professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. “In an animal, you can actually observe the effect. You’ll see things like weight loss, or organ damage. But when it’s just cells in a petri dish, it’s much harder to determine what constitutes an adverse outcome.”

Vandenberg agreed that efforts to reduce the number of animals used in regulatory testing should be applauded and show great potential. But on the narrow issue of whether there should ever be animal testing, she said, the goals of groups like PETA align closely with the chemical industry's.

"What they both have in common is that they don't want a system of modernized animal testing," she said. "PETA doesn't want it because they think it's unethical, and the industry opposes it because they're worried they might show how toxic some of these chemicals are."

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[[HYPERLINK "HTTPS://WWW.GOVEXEC.COM/OVERSIGHT/2019/10/SENATE-DEMOCRATS-DECRY-EPAS-DECISION-UNILATERALLY-IMPOSE-UNION-CONTRACT/160853/PRINT/"](https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2019/10/senate-democrats-decry-epas-decision-unilaterally-impose-union-contract/160853/print/)]

BY ERICH WAGNER

October 24, 2019

A group of 41 Senate Democrats on Tuesday demanded that Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler explain why the agency cut off talks early in negotiations with the American Federation of Government Employees and unilaterally implemented a new union contract.

In July, the EPA implemented a [[HYPERLINK "https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2019/06/epa-unilaterally-imposes-new-union-contract-slashing-telework-easing-firing/158023/"](https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2019/06/epa-unilaterally-imposes-new-union-contract-slashing-telework-easing-firing/158023/)]—over union objections—that evicted union representatives from agency office space, severely restricted the use of telework and blocked employees from filing grievances over disciplinary actions, among other changes. The decision came after AFGE and EPA could not reach agreement on ground rules for talks, a discussion that occurs early in the collective bargaining negotiation process.

Ordinarily, when parties cannot reach an agreement in negotiations, whether on contract proposals or ground rules, they seek assistance from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and if that fails, from the Federal Service Impasses Panel or through arbitration. AFGE has filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the agency in part over management's decision to bypass these steps, although EPA officials have insisted that they were right to implement the new contract unilaterally because of a nearly decade-long dispute over the previous agreement.

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., ranking member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, led lawmakers in their criticism of EPA's actions in a [[HYPERLINK "https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/191022_Letter_EPAAFGE.pdf"](https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/191022_Letter_EPAAFGE.pdf)].

"This contract cuts telework and official time, and eliminates employees' ability to challenge adverse actions through the union grievance process," the Democrats wrote. "[These] are sensitive issues that should have been negotiated in the course of good-faith bargaining. The EPA's actions appear to show a disregard for federal labor-management law."

The senators demanded information about EPA's reasoning for not going through the processes designed for settling union-agency disputes as part of the law governing federal labor-management relations. And they asked a number of questions relating to whether the White House or the Office of Management and Budget ever interfered in the negotiations.

"Did the White House, OMB, or any entity outside of EPA provide direction or guidance on the contract terms that EPA has imposed?" they asked. "[What] discretion did your negotiating team have to deviate from the seven-year contract term, the grievance proposal, or guidelines OMB or any other entity may have issued to EPA management?"

Questions from lawmakers regarding the White House's role in agency collective bargaining negotiations have become more common in recent months, as more and more agencies have either implemented new contracts unilaterally or moved swiftly through the collective bargaining process, often declaring an impasse after only a few days of negotiations over contract terms.

Earlier this month, an arbitrator found that the Health and Human Services Department engaged in [[HYPERLINK "https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/10/hhs-engaged-bad-faith-bargaining-union-arbitrator-finds/160430/"](https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/10/hhs-engaged-bad-faith-bargaining-union-arbitrator-finds/160430/)] when it rushed to impasse over a union contract last year.

In a statement, an EPA spokesperson said the agency is within its rights to unilaterally implement the contract because the union "refused" to bargain "in writing."

"EPA has tried to get AFGE to the negotiating table on the full contract, and it refused in writing," the spokesperson said. "So over two years into this administration on June 24, 2019, the agency provided the union notice that it intended to implement a new contract on July 8, 2019."

AFGE has maintained that it disagreed with a specific ground rules proposal regarding how much of the existing contract is under negotiation, which does not equate to an outright refusal to bargain.

BY ERICH WAGNER

October 24, 2019

Chemical

[HYPERLINK "https://www.register-herald.com/news/residents-updated-on-minden-superfund-site-efforts/article_838b901d-b2b8-5c26-af17-e0262dafa164.html"]

OAK HILL — Minden residents and others sought updates Wednesday from representatives of federal and state agencies during a community open house centered around the Shaffer Equipment/Arbuckle Creek Area Superfund site.

The open house at Dr. Amjad's office was attended by representatives of agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

According to background details supplied by the EPA, the Superfund site includes Shaffer Equipment Company property, Arbuckle Creek sediments and other areas where site-related contamination may be located. The EPA said site soils and sediment were historically contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which were used by Shaffer from 1970-84 to manufacture electrical substations for the local coal mining industry. The Minden site was one of seven added to the EPA's Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) in May 2019. That designation will allow more federal funds to investigate the PCB level in Minden.

During the open house, an informational handout detailed a timeline for current on-site activities. This month, the EPA has been in the area to finalize plans for an excavation and cap repair near the Shaffer Equipment property. Based on previous investigations and community input, the current action features excavation of a 100-foot-by-40-foot tract adjacent to an area which was capped in 2002. That work also includes regrading a drainage ditch to the south of the cap, as well as placing additional support where minor surface erosion has occurred at the eastern end of the sheet pile wall.

Next month, the first phase of sampling for the remedial investigation will begin. Additional sampling may be required. Goals of the testing, according to the handout, include characterizing soil contamination, determining site-related contaminants, and

better characterization of groundwater. The information gleaned will be used to determine if the site poses risks to human health and the environment.

A work crew of about six people will initially sample the following contaminants: PCBs, metals, pesticides, volatile organics, semi-volatile organics and dioxins/furans.

The remedial investigation will include sampling shallow and deep soil, drilling and sampling groundwater monitoring wells and conducting geophysical testing, sampling surface water and sediment along Arbuckle Creek, and collecting wipe samples at residential properties for PCBs.

Areas to be investigated include the former Shaffer Equipment property and adjoining areas, residential properties, Britt Bath House, Berwind Green Hill Mine Dump, Rocklick Road and Arbuckle Creek, wetlands and downstream areas.

The remedial investigation sampling is expected to wrap up sometime in December. Results are expected to the EPA for review in January 2020, and data analysis and evaluation will be ongoing during the winter.

A community update featuring the findings and the next steps is planned for next spring.

Email: [[HYPERLINK "mailto:skeen@register-herald.com"](mailto:skeen@register-herald.com)] or follow on Twitter @gb_scribe

[[HYPERLINK "https://nbcpalmsprings.com/2019/10/24/new-epa-report-shows-no-evidence-of-toxic-material-burning-in-thermal-mulch-fire/"](https://nbcpalmsprings.com/2019/10/24/new-epa-report-shows-no-evidence-of-toxic-material-burning-in-thermal-mulch-fire/)]

The report from the the Environmental Protection Agency on the air quality at school sites from the Thermal mulch fire show there is no evidence what's burning is dangerous.

Tests were done on October 22, 2019, that's more than a week after the fire started.

Dr. Cameron Kaiser, the county's public health officer helped us break down the report.

He says the tests were done because there was concern what was burning was toxic.

"They were looking not only for things such as carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and other kinds of combustion products, but they were also looking for things like cyanide and they were looking for volatile organic compounds which can be toxic in large quantities when inhaled," said Kaiser.

He says what's burning is green waste, made up of mainly plant materials, "That can still put up a lot of smoke we want people to be careful about that but we don't find any evidence that's it's burning anything toxic and we don't find anything toxic in the smoke."

Kaiser says there's a difference between air toxicity and air particulates and the smoke still poses a problem as seen during day four of the fire when the smoke sent over a dozen students to the hospital.

"Smoke can be really damaging particularly to people who have lung disease or if they have asthma or heart disease that's the kind of thing that will definitely send them to the hospital but even in these cases as we unfortunately tragically found out that can even happen to kids who don't have significant health problems and with smoke it has a lot of particulate matter in it that can get deep within the lungs themselves and even if the combustion products themselves aren't toxic they can still cause a lot of trouble within the lungs," he says.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District's particulate readings show fluctuations hour by hour that's why says it's best for those in sensitive groups to play it safe.

"Because we're still finding a lot of particulate matter in the air as the AQMD sensor station is showing we want people to minimize their outdoor activity so they're breathing in less of it, because it's going to be a few more days before they get the fire out completely," he says.

The SCAQMD advises the following:

If you smell smoke or see ash due to a wildfire, here are ways to limit your exposure:

- Remain indoors with windows and doors closed or seek alternate shelter;
- Avoid vigorous physical activity;
- Run your air conditioner if you have one. Make sure it has a clean filter and that it is recirculating the indoor air to prevent bringing additional smoke inside;
- Avoid using a whole-house fan or a swamp cooler with an outside air intake;
- Avoid using indoor or outdoor wood-burning appliances, including fireplaces and candles.

Older adults, young children, pregnant women, and people with heart diseases or lung diseases (such as asthma) may be especially sensitive to health risks from wildfire smoke.

Land

[HYPERLINK "<https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/EPA-to-begin-sampling-polluted-W-Virginia-site-14562103.php>"]

Oct. 25, 2019

[[HYPERLINK "https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/EPA-to-begin-sampling-polluted-W-Virginia-site-14562103.php"](https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/EPA-to-begin-sampling-polluted-W-Virginia-site-14562103.php) \ | "article-comments"]

MINDEN, W.Va. (AP) — Federal and West Virginia environmental officials say that next month the Environmental Protection Agency will begin sampling a contaminated site where mining equipment was manufactured decades ago.

The EPA announced in May the Shaffer Equipment/Arbuckle Creek Area Site in Minden had been added to its National Priorities List of Superfund sites, making it a federal concern for cleanup and funding.

The Register-Herald reports Minden residents were told at a forum Wednesday that investigators will begin in November taking samples to determine the level and kinds of contamination and the condition of groundwater.

Equipment used in mining was made at the site through the 1970s and 1980s and hazardous chemicals then spread to residential areas during flooding.

The results expected in January will help investigators understand what risks the site poses.

[**[HYPERLINK "https://www.heraldandnews.com/news/local_news/epa-grant-highlights-brownfield-sites-in-lake-county/article_f3306f57-09d5-5365-9080-d3f7879cf84e.html"](https://www.heraldandnews.com/news/local_news/epa-grant-highlights-brownfield-sites-in-lake-county/article_f3306f57-09d5-5365-9080-d3f7879cf84e.html)**]

After a year assessment into a three-year grant-funded process of identifying, testing and qualifying Lake County commercial properties for hazardous materials cleanup, most of the designated sites are now in the second phase seeking public comment and community involvement.

Ginger Casto, regional director of South Central Oregon Economic Development District, recently updated Lake County Commissioners regarding the Brownsfield Assessment Program, which has in its initial stages collaborated with six unused local properties.

The Brownfield Program, overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency, works with property owners to study sites for potential environmental hazards such as soil contamination or chemicals present in groundwater. If potentially hazardous materials

are discovered, the EPA will work with property owners to determine best methods for site cleanup.

To qualify as a Brownfield Project property, sites must be pending transfer for repurposing into useful community assets from one owner to another. These sites may contain environmental hazards from the property's previous use, such as the presence of pollutants or contaminants resulting from previous sites of gas stations, repair shops, warehouses, industrial facilities, landfills and dry cleaning operations.

"The EPA is pretty helpful in helping plan after the Phase one and Phase two are done, about what next steps would be for them to cleanup," said Casto.

"Sometimes they have loan programs to assist with that, it just depends on what is found and the potential price tag. Every property is on a case-by-case basis. The mill properties will cost more money to test and cleanup, it depends on what they find. We got two grants; one was for petroleum products to test, and the other was for hazardous substances, because of the types of industry that we had going on here."

Engineering consultants have completed initial phase testing on the Alger Theater, the Lakeview mortuary building, Lakeview Lumber, the Carlon Mill in Paisley, the Fremont Mill and Lakeview Lockers. Phase one identifies the projects and the potential hazards present, Phase two encourages public comment. Of these, all are now in Phase two of the Brownfields process, except Lakeview Lockers, which remains at Phase one.

"One of the biggest qualifiers is that the property is moving from one owner to another for one purpose to another," said Casto. "For instance, the Lakeview Lumber Mill site, the Carlon Mill in Paisley – those owners are wanting to sell. It is likely that those property owners might have difficulty moving it on because investors and banks on those industrial properties are asking for at least a Phase one Brownfields test study done before they before they agree to a loan. It's sort of like a house inspection when purchasing a new home, you want to know what's there before you invest in the whole thing. They will require that before they do the loan, and if there is something substantial they won't approve the loan. Or if the property owner refuses to go along with it through Phase one then there is no deal. It is good to know what you're getting into."

The EPA defines Brownfield properties as those with hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants, which may complicate redevelopment or reuse. EPA estimates there are 450,000 Brownfield sites in the United States. Clean-up and reinvesting serves to take pressure off under-developed open land, utilizes existing infrastructure, facilitates job growth, increases local tax bases and protects the environment.

"The Brownfield Project is not just about cleanup of hazardous materials and petroleum, they are also involved in planning after the fact," said Casto. "Unused sites could be used for things like a new grocery store, or more housing. I am excited that we are getting to this point, now we are at the point where the community can get involved."

“The EPA is pretty helpful in helping plan after the Phase one and Phase two are done, about what next steps would be for them to cleanup,” added Casto. “Sometimes they have loan programs to assist with that, it just depends on what is found and the potential price tag. Every property is on a case-by-case basis. We got two grants; one was for petroleum products to test, and the other was for hazardous substances, because of the types of industry that we had going on here.”

Community meetings regarding Brownfield sites are scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 5 at noon at the Paisley Community Center, and in Lakeview at 5 p.m. the same day at the Commissioners meeting room at the Lake County Courthouse to discuss projects and brainstorm ideas. Lunch will be served at the Paisley meeting. The purpose of these meetings is to brainstorm ideas for repurposing of properties.

“It is not a witch hunt,” Casto stated. “It used to be everyone was afraid of EPA thinking they would come in and shut you down. It’s not that way. They really do want these properties back functioning and on the tax rolls. So far it’s been a good experience, the property owners have been incredibly helpful and excited about finding out if there is anything on their property they need to deal with. The mill sites I am excited about are large enough that I think they have the potential for some amenities that our communities haven’t had the Carlon site in Paisley and the Lakeview Lumber site in Lakeview. The mortuary and Alger Theater are amenities the community really needs to continue. Things like abatement for asbestos, lead and mold are considered for the Alger and mortuary. (The mortuary) is on the market, and findings could affect transfers of property.”

Among the ideas that have been proposed for the mortuary building is possibly a brewpub or microbrewery, with macabre names to match the structure’s former purposes.

“We have the low hanging fruit for our first group, there are other properties I feel would qualify but the owners have chosen not to participate in the program,” said Casto. “Maybe as time goes on and they see how the process goes, they will feel more comfortable.”